Grand Central Station Becomes a War Movie

By ELENE FOSTER

TWO soldiers, one tall and thin, the other short and chunky, both travel stained and weary, emerged from the train-shed amid a throng of incoming travellers and aimlessly wended their way across the great white lobby of the Grand Central Station. It was plain to be seen that they were strangers and equally plain that they hadn't an idea as to where they were going or how they were to get there.

"Lamp the Life-Saving Station!"

Suddenly the tall one spied a sign which hung over an opening in the "Information Booth," under the illuminated clock. It read: "War Camp Community Service. Soldiers, Sailors, Marines! Let us tell you what to do and see, where to eat and sleep."

He grasped his companion's arm.

"Shorty," he said, "lamp the life-saving station!" and they quickened their steps and approached the booth.

Behind the opening sat a motherly woman in a blue uniform and sailor hat with the insignia of the National League for Women's Service on her lapels. She had seen the pair afar off and, without waiting for them to speak, she greeted them with a cordial smile and a cheery:

"Glad to see you, boys. Tell me what I can do to help you."

It was the little, chunky one who answered.

"We've just come off the train," he said in a deep, rich voice, "from San Antonio—Kelly Field, you know—and my friend is pretty nearly 'all in.' He's been sick and he's going home to Bangor, Me., for a few days. His train goes at 7 o'clock, so he has four hours to put in somewhere and he would like a place to lie down. I thought maybe there might be a rest-room here in the station where he could go. You see I can't stay with him because I'm on my way to Poughkeepsie—er—er—on business, and my train leaves in fifteen minutes, but I'd like to see him in a good comfortable place before I go. I'm awfully sorry to trouble you, but can you suggest anything? You see we don't know much about the town."

"Do you think that you could walk a few blocks?" the woman behind the counter asked of the tall, thin one who was leaning against the side of the booth, looking as if he were about to collapse at any moment.

"I'm sure I could if I took it slowly," he replied. "I've never been like this before—and I am so sorry to be such a nuisance," he added apologetically. "It's mighty good of you"——

"My dear boy, that's what I'm here for, it is my privilege to help you," and then she turned to me.

"Will you take him to our club?" she asked.

The little man gave his friend a hearty handshake. "So long, old man," he said. "I leave you in good hands."

Spoiling a Soldier For After the War

"It's mighty good of you," he said, in his shy way," to walk up here with me on this hot day. I tell you I won't forget it in a hurry. It's just another one of the kindnesses that we are receiving from our women all over the country. Oh, the women of this country are great! the greatest in the world. But I'm going to tell you one thing—the way that you're all spoiling us is something awful. Why, when the war's over there'll be no living with us, we'll be pampered and petted till we'll just be impossible. It's an awful chance that you're taking."

"We are willing to take that chance," I told him.

By this time we had reached the club which was our destination. It is the newest of the service clubs, opened only a short time ago by the National League for Women's Service at the corner of Madison Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street.

At the top of the brownstone steps stood Miss Winne, the director of the club, smiling a welcome, and I delivered the invalid into her charge and hurried back to the station. The next day I heard the rest of the story. The soldier boy had been given into the care of the orderly at the club. He had had a cool shower and been put to bed in a big, airy room, where the club doctor had visited him and given him medicine to quiet his heart. He had slept for two hours, been given a wholesome dinner and, refreshed and recuperated, had been put on the 7 o'clock train for Bangor, feeling quite like himself again.

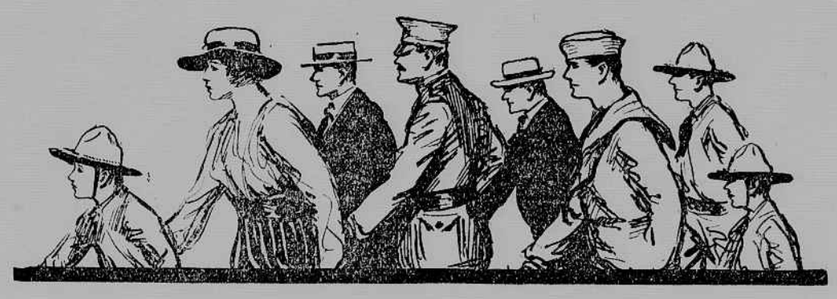
Photo by Paul Thompson.

Where do we go from here?

Rendering Service To the Service

And this is only one of a score of cases which come every day to the fortunate woman who sits behind the counter of the information booth at the Grand Central Station. It is her privilege to dispense all sorts of useful information not only to the soldiers and sailors and marines who come to her window, but to their women-folk as well, to the mothers and wives and sweethearts who have come to town to visit these men in camp or hospital.

It is quite a new departure, this special information booth for our men in the service. It was started less than a fortnight ago by the war Camp Community, which called on the National League for Women's Service to furnish volunteers for the work. The experiment has proven so successful and the results have been so gratifying at the Grand Central that a similar service has been established within the past few days at the Pennsylvania Station.



It takes a woman of a particular type to preside over a bureau of this kind. In the first place she must know her New York from the furthermost point in The Bronx to the most remote church in Brooklyn. She must be able to tell the inquirer the shortest route to any point.

Furthermore, she must be well versed in the location of service clubs and their terms to men in the service; in the amusements at the theatres; in the clothiers' and haberdashers' shops; and so on—in short she must be not only a Baedeker of New York, but a guide, philosopher and friend to the fighting men and their women-folk as well.

And so, although there have been dozens of women volunteers for this service, the committee in charge, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Henry G. Gennert, has been very slow in choosing its helpers. The attendants are on duty from 9 in the morning until 12 at night, working in four-hour shifts, and there is hardly a moment when there is not at least one man in uniform standing in front of the open window.

Pleasure, Please—Large Order

There was a big, clean-shaven marine who advanced to the window with a most business-like manner. He came to the point at once.

"I believe that you are the person who can help me," he said, "though it's nothing about trains or soldiers' clubs or anything really in your line, so to speak. It's just this: you see we're marines and proud of it, you bet—and we're had a hint that we'll be sent over before long, so we want one grand party before we go and we've set next Sunday as the day.

"We want to take our wives and sweethearts into the country for the day—into the real country where there won't be any crowd, where we can be by ourselves and play ball and go in swimming and just kick up our heels like puppy-dogs and enjoy it. I talked it over with the boys and they fell for it quick. I offered to give the party myself (I'm pretty well fixed as far as money goes), but they're all white men and they wouldn't hear to it, but they have left it with me to find the right place and make the arrangements.

"I'm not much acquainted hereabouts so I'm kind of up against it, but when I spotted that sign and got a look at your face, I just knew my troubles were over. You look like you could put it through if you made up your mind to do it. We don't want charity, you understand, we can afford to pay for it. Now, do you think that you can help us? I know it's a pretty large order."

"Call me up at this number at 6 o'clock. I think I shall have all the arrangements complete by then," came the quick answer.

"I should say it is rather a large order," I remarked, after the marine had expressed his gratitude and departed.

"Not at all," was the reply. "I shall call up one of the country clubs and ask them to give up their house and grounds for this one Sunday to the marines. Any one of them will be only too glad to do it. Our motor corps will see to their transportation, and if the club can't serve them with two good meals our canteen can. So that is as good as settled."

And it was settled; for the very first club to which she applied was only too delighted to be allowed to perform this service, and the party was an assured success.

They Also Serve Who Wear No Uniform

A shabby, weak-faced young man, clad in a ragged coat and trousers tucked into high rubber boots, timidly approached the window.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said, "but I'm in the service, even if I ain't in uniform. I'm an able-bodied seaman, I am, just off me ship. I come home to git my pay and give me mother a surprise visit. I went home and the tenement was locked and my mother is gone away and won't be back till ter-morrer. I only got 50 cents and I been to some of the clubs an' to the Y. M. C. A., and they wouldn't let me in 'cause I ain't in uniform. Maybe you can tell me where to go till ter-morrer. I git my six months' pay in the morning, and it'll be a good bit too, because I helped rescue the passengers of the President Lincoln. I got about $600 coming to me that I'm going to give, the most of it, to my old mother. But I gotta find a place to go to-night."

He was given a card to the Soldiers and Sailors' Club, where he had a bath, a good meal and a ticket for the movies. And the next morning, after a good night's rest in a real bed, he started off, accompanied by a man from the club, to collect his salary, which was duly received and given into his mother's keeping.

Wanted: Safe and Sane Joy for Thirty-five

There was also a company of soldiers, thirty-five of them, from Georgia, en route to one of the camps in charge of a young officer who had never been in New York before. The officer asked the time of departure of a local train, and was referred to the station information man on the other side of the booth. In a minute or two he returned with a troubled expression on his boyish face.

"I'm in rather a hole," he explained. "I have thirty-five men with me, and we expected to go out on a train which has just left and there isn't another until 11 o'clock to-night. I can't let my men loose in the city, and I don't know what to do with them for nine hours. Maybe you can suggest something."

Again the new service club came to the fore. The attendant hastily scribbled a note, gave directions to the young officer, and off they went, tramp, tramp across the marble floor and on up Madison Avenue. Arrived at the club they "washed up," had luncheon in the lovely outdoor canteen under the trees, spent the afternoon writing letters, or reading, or playing billiards and other games; and after dinner an informal dance was held for them in the big drawing room. At 10:30 they marched off amid the cheers and goodbys of their new-found friends. I saw them as they marched into the station, still smiling over the good time that they had enjoyed, and I had a word with the young officer.

"I thought we Southerners knew the meaning of the word 'hospitality,'" he said, "but I had to come North to find the real thing."

And so it goes on from morning until midnight, day after day. Hats off, I say, to the War Camp Community, whose idea it was to establish this service for our soldiers and sailors and marines; and hats off to the women who sit behind the counter and with rare intelligence and judgment advise these men "what to do and see, where to eat and sleep."

FOR AND ABOUT CHILDREN

Birthday Parties by Proxy

By JEAN FURNISS

"I HAVE a plan," said Marcia, when the six or seven children who always came to the small village to spend the long summer months were assembled. Marcia is eight years old, and for years she had been the leading spirit. Her suggestions are always received respectfully and her plans are usually adopted.

"Is it fun?" asked Virginia, who is four and a devotee of pleasure.

"Yes, it is a plan for a new kind of birthday party. You know every one of us has a birthday some time during the summer, and we each have a birthday party, don't we? Well, my plan is this, and if you all agree to it we will have time to do it for Alan's birthday, it doesn't come for three weeks, and his is the first of the series. I thought we might have my mother, who is working on the 'Aid for Homeless French and Belgian Children,' write to France and get the names of four little French and three little Belgian children and we will each play that we have adopted one of them, and when our birthdays come we will give the child who has the birthday the things the poor little French child will need and we will make the presents into a parcel and tie it up at the party and send it to the child all ourselves."

"I think that is a perfectly fine plan," cried Alan, "and I am glad my birthday is coming so soon. I am going to get mademoiselle to help me write a letter myself to see if I can't find a boy just my age. I'll bet I'd know just what he'd like. Let's find mademoiselle and ask her if she will help."

"They are all ze darlings, n'est-ce-pas?" cried mademoiselle, who entered into the plan with all her French enthusiasm.

All the mothers of the children approved heartily and offered all sorts of helpful suggestions in carrying the scheme out. Marcia's mother easily obtained the names of seven French and Belgian children whose ages nearly corresponded to those of the seven children who lived so safely in their big gardens in Goshen.

On Alan's birthday, which came on June 21, the children could hardly wait for 3 o'clock in the afternoon to come around. Everybody knows that that is the hour at which every properly conducted birthday party begins. At the very moment that the shadow on the big dial in the middle of Alan's father's old-fashioned garden marked the hour of 3, the six hilarious guests trooped through the gate and up through the flower-bordered walk and knocked impatiently with the ancient knocker on Alan's front door.

There was no difference between this party and every other nice birthday party one has ever attended. There was the same gay marquee tent and the same ice cream and cookies in the shapes of hearts and trees and houses and little men; only after the maids had cleared the table did the difference appear.

If you do not believe that children can appreciate the beauty of the time-honored saying that it is better to give than to receive you could not have helped but be convinced by Alan's joyful capers when all the presents appeared that were to go to little Jean in far-away Tours, for that is where Jean had been taken by some kind women when his own family all were lost in the terrible bombardment of Lille.

Alan had bought a splendid knife for Jean with his savings that had been put by for a knife for himself. Marcia had a red bank for him, within which a bright gold piece rattled gaily. That contribution was the money her Aunt Cornelia had given her for helping to carry the Red Cross convalescing suits to the workrooms every Wednesday. Virginia brought a box of paints and a book of pictures ready to be colored. They were pictures of all our native American animals, which were sure to interest little French Jean. Christopher brought a bag of marbles, John a picture puzzle, Clement a mechanical boat, and Baby Ann's contribution was a jolly little music box, which tinkled out the gayest little tune in the world when you turned the handle.

Marcia's mother had given the children a cunning little trunk in which to pack the gifts. Alan's mother came out with a neat pile of Alan's outgrown clothes, which would surely fit the little French boy, who was a trifle younger and perhaps sadly thinner than the robust little American. Another mother had knit a nice little red sweater for Jean. Still another had added a cap, scarf and mittens.

With great excitement and much goings on everything was neatly packed. Mademoiselle helped the children and fitted each little gift gaily tied up with ribbon securely into its place. After all there was a big square hole. What was there to fill that space?

While this great problem was under consideration Alan's grandmother came out into the garden carrying a large square box. In it was every sort of cookie a little boy could possibly want, and plenty of lolly-pops. You see, he could not have a cake, because it takes a long time for even the quickest of birthday boxes to cross the ocean and find its way to Tours.

Vegetables You Should Know

By ELIZA WYNKOOP

TIMOTHY TURNIP he lives downstairs,
No one could say that he puts on airs;
He lives in a box that's made of wood,
Very simple, but strong and good.
And mother can always depend on him
If she thinks the dinner is kind of thin;
He's a fat old thing, but he does combine,
And he makes boiled dinners uncommonly fine.

OH, Ann Letitia Carrottop, she is a stupid thing,
She is sort of orange colored with a bang of greenish string,
She hasn't any manners and she hasn't any style,
But when you see her in your soup—
She makes you want to smile,
She looks so handsome in your soup
She makes a person smile.

The Chow Dogs

By BEATRICE WASHBURN

THE Chow dogs wear no coats to-day
To show that Summer's on the way.
But some have sweaters, green or brown,
And wear them all about the town.

They lead their mistresses by strings
And are the very dearest things!
With fluffy figures, square and neat,
They walk serenely up the street.

They do not look to left or right,
They do not quarrel, growl or fight;
And, by the proud look in their eyes
I think they're princes in disguise!